



Published May 25th, 2022

## Town council provides direction to staff for Fiscal Year 2022-23 Budget

By Vera Kochan

Marin Clean Energy's Deep Green program, the American Rescue Plan Act, and a Parks and Recreation Department reorganization were the main topics of consideration regarding the Fiscal Year 2022-23 Budget discussion between the town council and staff during a May 11 meeting. Council Member Sona Makker was absent that evening.

Town Manager Cynthia Battenberg's presentation to council members provided specific questions as to what direction staff was expected to take. In the case of Deep Green, "Should the town opt for Deep Green service, and if so, only for the street lights or for all town facilities?"

At this point in time, the town subscribes to a Marin Clean Energy (MCE) Light Green program providing 60% of renewable energy. Deep Green would account for 100%. Moraga has been on track to meet Climate Action Plan goals with the purchase of hybrid vehicles, EV charging stations and eventual solar energy for town facilities. An additional annual cost to the town by opting into Deep Green would entail \$3,045 (General Fund for all town facilities) and \$2,334 (Fund 500 - Lighting Assessment District for Street Lights) totaling \$5,379. The town council agreed that paying approximately \$1 per household annually was worth the lessening of a carbon footprint.

The distribution of the \$4,254,072 in ARPA funds could include general government services, and storm drain investment besides assistance to impacted town businesses. "Should the town carryover \$32,400 of the IT Broadband funding to continue implementation of high-speed fiber services to town facilities?"

Due to installation delays by the town's provider, only \$3,000 of the FY 2021-22 budget allocation of \$50,904 will be spent by fiscal year end. The council agreed that the \$32,400 be carried over and include the town's Emergency Operations Center.

Under the ARPA category, "Should the town continue funding the storm drain system infrastructure improvement, and eliminate funding of the Slide and Basin Failure and Sediment Basin Studies?"

There are several expenses that fall under the storm drain umbrella: Temporary Senior Civil Engineer (\$93,000); Storm Drain Maintenance and Repair (\$125,186); 2021-23 Annual Road Rehab and Storm Drain Repairs 21-205 (\$1,125,000); and Moraga Road and Hacienda Drainage Project 21-206 (\$56,000). Total costs: \$1,399,186. Council members agreed to put on hold a \$50,000 expense toward both basin projects and to carry on with the infrastructure improvements.

With regards to government services, "Should the town transfer \$310,000 to the General Fund to be spent on Government Services; and should the town budget \$71,500 for implementation of a finance software upgrade to Springbrook Cloud?"

The council agreed to the General Fund transfer, because in FY 2021-22, the town allocated \$310,000 in ARPA Funds which could be used for government services. Additionally, the town uses outdated software, and council members felt it necessary to upgrade the system in order for staff to increase efficiency with regards to data generation.

"Should the town fund the shortfall necessary to complete the Bollinger Canyon Special Study Area Rezone (\$65,000) and Housing Element and General Plan Update (\$418,000)?"

The council agreed to use ARPA funds for these projects.

COVID-related small business assistance has already seen an allocation of nearly \$200,000 in ARPA funds used to boost Moraga's Chamber of Commerce and independent retailers. "Should the town allocate additional funding to the Chamber and/or for grants to impacted small businesses?"

The council decided to wait until more information was forthcoming from the Chamber as to whether any additional funds were necessary, and if so how much.

A Parks and Recreation Department Reorganization became necessary once the new Hacienda tenant, Wedgewood Weddings, assumed management of events in November 2021. "Should the town reallocate 20% of the Parks and Rec Director's time to other recreation and open space needs and to public outreach; and should the town reallocate the Recreation Supervisor's time to recreation programs to expand the programs offered to the community?"

Now that Wedgewood Weddings has taken over event venues and freed up staff to put their energies elsewhere within the department, the council agreed to the reallocation of time for both positions.

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